



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Reply to Austrian FM Plassnik**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Bruce Connuck  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 21, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Minister Plassnik for addressing us today. Through you we want to express our very deep appreciation to the Austrian government and the city of Vienna for the warm hospitality they have extended for so many years now to CSCE, OSCE and all of the delegations.

It is also fitting that we use your presence here today, Minister Plassnik, to recognize Austria's vitally important contribution to the OSCE. Austria played a leading role in ensuring that the Human Dimension was incorporated into the Helsinki Final Act.

At the time few really understood how critically important that decision would become.

Although our world today is vastly different than the one facing the signatories of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the OSCE's strength remains in its comprehensive approach to security. Promoting democracy and respect for human rights is fundamental to creating a free, prosperous and secure OSCE region.

That recognition, first put forward by the framers of the Helsinki Final Act, is what has made the OSCE a vital organization, and it remains as important today as it was 30 years ago.

Today, as before, the OSCE vigorously promotes the values of freedom and democracy by developing the building pieces embodied in those broad principles – release from state sanctioned restraint, a vibrant civil society, an flourishing independent media, open political competition with freedom of assembly, a democratic election process meeting widely-agreed upon international standards, ethnic and religious tolerance and understanding, respect for human rights and the rule of law, competent civil administration, and a market economy.

These are the immutable components of the democracy that every OSCE participating State should be striving to promote, because we all have subscribed to these principles without reservation. This is why the OSCE continues to make an important contribution to freedom in its fifty-five member community of nations and beyond.

The OSCE is proving every day that it has the inherent ability to adapt to a changing environment. Over the past decade, the organization has responded to new events and challenges and has moved in new directions not previously associated with the OSCE.

It is mark of the OSCE's flexibility that we have expanded our substantive focus to include new issues, including tolerance, migration and integration.

But our expansion has not been without focus. The OSCE has successfully carved out niches where it is making a difference, filling a void and, in many respects, establishing itself as an internationally recognized leader.

The organization's work in counter-terrorism is an excellent example. Before September 11, 2001, the OSCE did not have a counter-terrorism program. Yet, in the ensuing four years, OSCE participating States have established an Action against Terrorism unit and undertaken a broad range of commitments that have strengthened our ability to combat terrorism. In doing so, we have substantially contributed to our collective security.

At the same time, our geographic focus is shifting with the southward and eastward march of democracy. Our welcoming of new partners for cooperation illustrates the OSCE's attractiveness to countries going through considerable transition, and it is in all of our interest to respond to their requests for assistance.

Our election support work in Afghanistan is assisting that partner in its efforts to plant the seeds of democracy and to encourage citizen participation in democratic processes. As our own security is directly linked to that of our neighbors, we should be as helpful as possible when and wherever we can.

Thirty years ago, the Helsinki process offered a vision of Europe united in freedom, prosperity and peace. The OSCE has proved that it is a "can-do" organization and that it is capable of meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

But, as President Ford declared thirty years ago, we will be judged not by the promises we make, but by the promises we keep. As we look into the future, it is now up to us, through our hard work, dedication and commitment, to keep alive the vision that underpinned the Helsinki process, and to ensure that the OSCE succeeds in fully realizing Helsinki's great promise to all 55 participating States.

Thank you. Mr. Chairman.